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Running Head: MORE WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT: ADVOCACY LESSONS LEARNED
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MORE WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT: ADVOCACY LESSONS LEARNED
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PIM 75

Advisor: Dr. Jeff Unsicker

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a
Master of Arts in Intercultural Service, Leadership, and Management at the SIT Graduate
Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

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Date: May 22, 2017

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Introduction

The following paper presents a case study of an ongoing political campaign to increase women's political participation in the Republic of Georgia's Parliament. It tells the story of a dedicated group of advocates who, despite many historical, social and political obstacles, are determined to help women's voices be heard in a primarily male-dominated political context. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to interview and spend time with some of the brightest, most dedicated women I have ever met, and I am inspired by their dedication to ensuring that all Georgian voices are heard.

My journey at SIT Graduate Institute began out a desire to develop practical skills that would be useful as I pursued a career in international development, and it was at SIT that I was introduced to the world of policy advocacy. As I began the off-campus phase of my program, I knew that I wanted to focus on policy advocacy in an international development context, but was unsure how I would merge these two related interests into a compelling capstone. As luck would have it, my practicum placement indirectly introduced me to one of the most interesting policy advocacy cases I have studied to date.

I began my practicum in Burlington, Vermont, as a Democracy and Governance (DG) intern at Tetra Tech ARD International Development. Tetra Tech primarily implements USAID contracts throughout various technical sectors, and I spent three months working on USAID-funded DG projects from the company's home office. As the end of my internship neared, I was given the opportunity to extend for several months, and to move to a project field office in Tbilisi, Georgia. I jumped at the opportunity and joined the Good Governance Initiative, a five-year USAID funded project implemented by Tetra Tech ARD, for five months- from September

2016 to February 2017. The project aims to help the Government of Georgia become more fair, accountable, and transparent through working with various levels of government (including Parliament) to implement reforms.

The Good Governance Initiative works closely with Georgia’s Parliament, which results in frequent trainings and presentations with Members of Parliament (MPs) regarding various issues such as public financial management, budgeting, and legal reform. As I was reflecting on one of my first parliamentary visits, I realized that I had only seen one woman Parliamentary member. While I did not expect to see equal representation, the stark contrast between the gender of the representatives was startling. Not long after this observation, a GGI colleague, Nino Vardosanidze, and I attended a conference entitled “Win With Women- Making Politics More Inclusive,” hosted by the Swedish International Development Agency and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). While the GGI project does not directly work to enhance women’s political participation, our team encouraged us to attend the conference to identify potential opportunities for collaboration with other donor projects. The conference brought together women leaders from Parliament and the Executive, civil society, and political parties to discuss issues around gender equality and women’s political participation. Specific panels focused on women’s political and electoral participation, challenges that women in Georgian face, women’s parliamentary structures and their work, and the results of a recent public survey regarding gender issues in Georgia.

It was after this conference, and after subsequent conversations with Nino, that I learned of the Georgian Women’s Movement. Intrigued, I began to research but found few online resources about the movement apart from several short articles in local Georgian newspapers. As

I would soon find out, the best resources for my research indeed turned out to be my connections through work, and by extension, my colleagues’ professional connections.

Through additional conversations with my colleague Nino, I learned of the Women’s Task Force for Political Participation, a coalition of NGOs formed in 2008 to advocate for a mandatory gender quota in Georgia’s Parliament. The Task Force began in 2014 and has since taken positive steps towards greater gender equality in Georgia’s Parliament by utilizing a variety of advocacy strategies to lobby for a mandatory gender quota. In doing so, the advocates have played a significant role in shifting attitudes regarding women in parliament and progressing the platform for gender equality in Georgian politics. My research grew to primarily focus on the Task Force’s advocacy methods, although much of my research focuses on the related Georgian Women’s Movement as well. This case study focuses on the Task Force’s advocacy through January 2017, a time of reflection and planning as the advocates plan for the next phase of the campaign later this year.

Research Methods

For the purpose of this paper, a series of first-hand interviews with Task Force members are the primary source of information, along with an analysis of existing literature regarding women’s political participation in Georgia, including press releases and international donor reports. It is important to note that my research was entirely independent of my role at Tetra Tech/GGI, but it was certainly made possible by the opportunity to be in-country and the personal and professional connections I developed as a result. My primary research method was in-person interviews with three key leaders of the campaign: Maka Meshveliani, Teona Kupunia, and Nino Janashia. Below is a summary of each interviewee and their role in the campaign. I

obtained informed consent for each interview, and have permission to use their names in this paper.

Maka Meshveliani: Maka is currently the Gender Program Manager at UNDP Georgia. She previously worked with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) Georgia, where her involvement with women’s political participation began. She and a colleague at NDI were some of the first to identify a gender quota as the issue the campaign would focus on. Maka is very involved with the Georgian Women’s Movement and is also a member of the Women’s Task Force for Political Participation.

Teona Kupunia: Teona is Senior Program Officer of the Georgia office of the National Democratic Institute. Since 2011, she has managed and implemented NDI programs aimed at building more responsive political institutions in Georgia. She was charged with establishing and overseeing the Task Force on Women’s Political Participation and is one of the main leaders of the Task Force today. Teona supports the Georgian Women’s Movement but focuses on high-level advocacy/lobbying rather than grassroots movements. She is a political scientist by training and holds two master’s degrees in International Relations, and International and European Affairs.

Nino Janashia: Nino is Executive Manager of BRIDGE Innovation and Development. BRIDGE is a spin-off legacy organization of Oxfam and builds on Oxfam’s 22 years of experience working in Georgia. BRIDGE works in several sectors including policy development, and supports gender sensitive policies. Nino is an unofficial leader of the Task Force and has been active in its advocacy for years. She was previously a lawyer with the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy, and holds a Master’s Degree in International and European Law.

In addition to key informant interviews, my research also drew on personal experiences, such as the Win with Women conference and various observations I gained from my time spent living and working in Georgia. I also consulted secondary resources including local newspaper articles, data from the National Democratic Institute (NDI), and various international donor reports.

Paper Organization

This paper begins with an overview of the context in which the campaign takes place, including the historical, political, legal, and social framework of Georgia. It then moves to introduce and describe the advocates, and their proposed policy of a gender quota. An analysis of the political context follows, which explains the key targets and stakeholders relevant to the advocates' campaign. The paper then moves to explain the Task Force and Georgian Women Movement's strategy and tactics, and concludes with an evaluation of the campaign and analysis of lessons learned.

Context

Brief History of Georgia

The Republic of Georgia is a small, beautiful country strategically located in the South Caucasus, with a long history that dates back to the 9th century. Throughout centuries, Georgia was the object of conflicting interests between Russia, Persia, and Turkey, and was eventually annexed by Russia in the 19th century, only experiencing a brief period of independence from 1917 to 1921. In 1991 upon the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia became an independent state; however, it was not without multiple challenges. Tense relationships with Russia

characterized this period and still abound, further exacerbated by the conflict with the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are supported by Moscow. Moreover, the United States has a strategic interest in the country, partially because of its investment in an oil pipeline from Azerbaijan to Turkey, which runs through Georgia, and additionally, due to the country's location and United States' desire to increase its economic and political influence in the region (Shakarian, 2015). Conflicting foreign interests in the country have long served as the background for Georgia's development and have significantly contributed to its political environment.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgians overwhelmingly voted to turn away from communism and restore independence, thereby electing a nationalist leader Zviad Gamsakhurdia as president. Soon thereafter, however, Gamsakhurdia was overthrown by opposition militias and the former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze was established as the country's new leader. Under Shevardnadze's leadership, poverty, crime, and corruption increased, and the country's economy heavily depended on Russia (BBC, 2016). In 2003, Shevardnadze was ousted following mass demonstrations regarding widespread accusations of electoral fraud (known as the Rose Revolution), and while Georgians were now independent, their economy suffered greatly due to weakening relations with Russia.

The Rose Revolution resulted in the election of Mikheil Saakashvili as president, and he served in this capacity for two terms until 2013. Saakashvili's presidency was characterized by an extremely pro-Western, pro-democracy outlook, and the government embarked on a journey to democratize the country through myriad reforms, amendments, and laws (BBC, 2016). While impressive results were achieved regarding combatting corruption and strengthening the state, this period was also characterized by complex relations with Russia. In 2014, Giorgi

Margvelashvili was elected as president and he has continued to push for economic and governance reforms, continuing to rebuild Georgia in its transition to a democracy and free market economy. It is also important to note that constitutional reform in 2013 transferred considerable authority from the Presidency to the Prime Minister's Office (Economist, 2016).

While much has been accomplished since the Rose Revolution, there are still many challenges the Georgian government faces as the country continues to develop including poorly managed state enterprises, inefficient public service delivery, and related governance issues. Accordingly, a number of international donors, including USAID, World Bank, the EU, and UNDP, have a presence in Georgia working on various programs to assist the country's development.

Political and Legal Framework

In addition to history, the political context of Georgia must be understood in order to situate previous and current advocacy efforts regarding gender equality in the country. Georgia is a semi-presidential representative democratic republic with a multi-party system. The President of Georgia, currently Giorgi Margvelashvili, is the Head of State and the Prime Minister, Giorgi Kvirikashvili, is the Head of the Cabinet of Georgia. Together, the President, the Prime Minister, and Cabinet wield executive power.

The Parliament of Georgia is the primary representative body of the country, exercising legislative power, determining domestic and foreign policy, and assuming responsibility for governmental activity. It is a mixed system, including 150 members. Of those, 77 are elected through a 'closed list' proportional system, meaning that voters essentially cast one vote for their preferred party, rather than individual candidates. Before the election, parties create a list of

candidates who are elected in the order in which they appear on the list. The remaining 73 Georgian MPs are elected through single-mandate majoritarian districts in which a single candidate with the majority of votes represents the district (“winner takes all”). Parliamentary members are elected for four years and are assigned to serve on various committees throughout their tenure in office. The Prime Minister is the head of the Government of Georgia and assumes responsibility for the activity of other government members.

Historically, Georgia has had the lowest rate in the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) region regarding women’s participation and representation in Parliament. In fact, according to data from 2014, women’s representation in the Georgian Parliament is barely half of the global average (see chart #1) (Stefanczak, 2015). It has long been difficult for women to be elected as representatives in Georgia; in the past 25 years, the proportion of women MPs has hovered around only 10 percent. Currently, the number of female MPs in Georgia is around 15% percent, 22 out of 150 parliament members are women. This is far short of the “critical mass” of 30% that the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) identifies as necessary for real impact (UNDP, 2017). Additionally, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Georgia ranks 147th in the world regarding women’s representation in parliament (Yundt, 2015). At the local level, the situation is equally grim; women constitute only 11 percent of over 2000 local councilors across the country, only two out of 69 governors are women, and there are no female mayors in Georgia (NDI, 2015).

Chart #1: World and Regional Averages of Women in Parliament

Regional Averages	Percentage of Women in Parliament
Nordic countries	42.1%
Americas	25.2%
Europe (Nordic countries included)	25.1%
Europe (Nordic countries excluded)	23.5%
Sub-Saharan Africa	22.9%
Asia	18.9%
Arab States	17.8%
Pacific	13.4%
World Average	21.8%
Georgia	12%

The Georgian Parliament does, in theory, recognize the importance of women’s political participation, as is evident with the passage of the law “On Gender Equality” and National Action Plan in 2010. The Gender Equality Council of Parliament, an internal advisory structure, was also developed in 2010 and remains as a committee today. However, despite the legislative initiatives promoting a gender equality agenda, women are still under-represented at decision-making levels. Georgian parties do not typically nominate women to be on the list for the proportional system, stating that voters are content with male candidates (Askerova, 2015).

Ekaterine Gejadze, a Global Fund for Women Advisor and Program Coordinator for the Women’s Fund in Georgia, states:

There is a huge discrepancy between the country’s official, and quite superficial, gender equality strategy and the real situation of women and girls...The legislative gains made in the past two decades were accompanied by growing backlash against women’s rights and gender equality. In Georgia, women still face such problems as exclusion from public and political life, violence, and rigid gender roles and stereotypes” (Potter, 2014)

Social Context and Perceptions

The issue of gender imbalance in Georgian politics must be viewed not only through a political/structural lens but also through an understanding of historical, social norms and cultural attitudes regarding traditional gender roles. Longstanding cultural attitudes serve as an obstacle to achieving more female representatives in parliament, especially because politics are traditionally seen as a man’s game. Khatuna Gogorishvili, a former member of parliament from the United National Movement, explained that she believes that systemic reforms need to go hand in hand with cultural change since many Georgian women don’t see politics as a “feminine thing” (Askerova, 2015). Similarly, Erika Kvapilova, UN Women’s regional program director for Georgia, explained that “cultural and national traditions and discriminatory stereotypes remain a barrier to women exercising their right to occupy an equal place” (Askerova, 2015). Traditionally in many Georgian families, women are expected to be the primary caregivers, responsible for childcare, housework, and meal preparation (UNDP, 2013).

The fact that Georgia has a split political system comprised of single mandate and closed list proportional representation has historically served as a challenge for women because parties have the ability to choose their own candidates to serve on their respective party list (and do not frequently choose women candidates). Additionally, deep-seeded cultural notions regarding traditional gender roles have served to diminish opportunities for women to run as candidates because politics are viewed as a man’s profession. It is also crucially important to note the influence of the Orthodox Church in Georgian society and by extension, political sphere. Over 80% of Georgia’s 4.5 million people say they belong to the Georgian Orthodox Church (BBC, 2014) and the 84-year old Patriarch, Ilia II, is highly revered. The church promotes traditional

gender roles and limited roles for women outside of the household, which serves as a challenge to achieving greater political representation. Indeed, the political and cultural context of Georgia provides unique challenges and insight into advocates’ strategies to date, and they must be continually evaluated as advocates progress with the campaign for greater women’s political participation in Georgia.

Advocates

The Georgian Women’s Movement and subsequent Task Force on Women’s Political Participation are the two main groups that have been responsible for advocating for increased political participation for women in Georgia. While the Task Force itself was the group to introduce the gender quota, the Women’s Movement has been equally important in garnering public support and disseminating the idea of a gender quota in a way that is accessible and easily understood by citizens who may not have a clear understanding of the political process. The two organizations have worked, and continue to work, together to advocate for political change in Georgia. It is also important to note that some members of the Task Force are also members of the Women’s Movement, which is more of a grassroots campaign without formal membership, while the Task Force is a structured unit comprised of twenty key stakeholders.

Task Force

The Task Force on Women’s Political Participation began under the leadership of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), an international nonprofit, nonpartisan nongovernmental organization that supports democratic institutions around the world. For the last three decades, NDI has worked in Georgia in various capacities including working with political parties,

parliament, and civil society to improve accountability to the public and enhance citizen engagement in decision-making processes (NDI, 2016). NDI partners with elected officials to consult with citizens, incorporate their feedback on draft legislation and policy, and improve coordination and cooperation with civil society. This is largely informed by NDI’s public opinion research, which is conducted through various polls that seek to measure public opinion on various policy issues in Georgia. The data is then used to inform political and civic leaders of citizens’ concerns. Since 2003, NDI has particularly focused on fair elections and gender issues in Georgia. Along with NDI, there are many other international organizations and donors present in Georgia that seek to advance the country’s gender equality agenda, but there been little donor coordination in programming to date.

In 2013 and 2014, NDI, was working on a project, funded by the Swedish International Development Agency, that aimed to build more responsible and transparent institutions in Georgia. A large component of the project was focused on political parties and how it is their responsibility to uphold democratic principles in the country. According to Teona Kupania, Program Officer at NDI and one of the first members of the Georgian Women’s Movement, discussions surrounding implementation of this program brought up the concept of making more room for women, supporting women leadership development, and increasing representation in parliament. The need for gender programming was additionally supported by empirical data produced by NDI through various public opinion polls, but at the time there was little public engagement in the push for greater women participation in parliament.

However, in 2013, a large wave of femicide took place in Georgia when over 20 women were killed by their boyfriends, husbands, or former partners for making the decision to either

end the relationship or because they decided to pursue a career outside the household (NDI, 2015). While horrific in any context, in a small country such as Georgia the numbers were shocking and garnered a great deal of national attention. Never before had the Georgian public been so aware of the serious issue of domestic violence in their country, and many citizens were inspired to take action and demand change. While NDI had already been discussing the need for greater women’s political participation, the multiple cases of domestic violence and subsequent media attention served as a trigger event to mobilize and motivate advocates to take action. In fact, on November 25, 2014, thousands of people in 23 cities throughout Georgia gathered to protest gender-based murder and assault. Women and men alike demanded that the government put more effort into investigating the previous year’s murder cases, and provide greater protectionary measures for women.



(Photo: Anna Tizliarishvili/Global Fund) 1

It was at this time that the Task Force for Women’s Political Participation began to take shape. The initial members of the task force were local Georgian employees at NDI who recognized the need for a tailored and targeted campaign for greater gender equality in

parliament, bolstered by the belief that more women representatives would lead to a greater discussion of women's rights in Georgia -- including gender-based violence. The task force quickly grew to include representatives from several international organizations and local nonprofits. While all initial members agreed that more women in parliament would lead to an agenda that would better represent women's issues, task force members did not initially agree on the best way to pursue this agenda. However, after several discussions and strategy meetings, the task force agreed that a mandatory gender quota would be the best option to pursue.

According to Maka Meshveliani, Gender Programming Manager at UNDP and former NDI employee, a mandatory quota was a necessary starting point. Before the task force was formed, NDI had already been working on gender issues independently and so the advocates knew the political context and the involved players well. Through previous work with political parties, NDI staff knew that most MPs did not take the issue of gender equality in parliament seriously, and Members of Parliament would openly laugh at the advocates, trivialize the underrepresentation of women, and stated that since they had female personal assistants, they had achieved gender equality. Meshveliani explained that the advocates felt that apart from a mandatory measure, men would essentially refuse to give up their power. In his book, *The Democracy Owner's Manual*, Jim Shultz discusses five steps of policy analysis: defining the problem, getting the information you need, interpreting the information, developing and judging alternatives, and lastly, making a choice (Shultz, 2002). The Task Force members inadvertently followed this framework through being intimately familiar with the problem of limited representation for women and through access to NDI polls and research. The choice to pursue a gender quota was the result of many hours of deliberation and discussion over how to best

advocate for increased representation for women in parliament, and perhaps because it seemed there were no other alternatives to ensure female participation.

In addition, the advocates also felt that it would be important to identify a common goal for supporters to rally around. While many groups supported women's representation in parliament, the specific cause of a gender quota provided an opportunity for various stakeholders to unify around a specific shared goal. An identified approach allowed for a unified response and served as an opportunity for women's rights organizations to collaborate and be united in their common goal for greater women's political participation.

While the initial group of advocates was comprised of a large number of representatives from various organizations, facilitated by NDI, after the 2014 introduction and subsequent rejection of the gender quota bill the Task Force realized that a new, streamlined approach was necessary. It was at this point that the Task Force was reorganized into a more nimble group of key players. Kupunia explained that, while a difficult decision, the restructuring of the Task Force was necessary to enhance its effectiveness moving forward with the second wave of the gender quota campaign.

The second phase of the Task Force, and its current composition, includes representatives from international organizations including NDI, UNDP, OXFAM, and Transparency International (TI), as well as Georgian organizations such as the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA), BRIDGE Innovation and Development, and others. In total, there are 10 international organizations and 10 local organizations as Task Force members. While the Task Force is indeed "owned" by all members, funding continues to come from NDI and the co-leadership of two members -- one international and one local organization -- rotates bi-annually.

For example, during the fall of 2016, the Task Force was facilitated by OXFAM and GYLA together, and now the facilitation has been passed to a different INGO and local organization. In this manner, the Task Force hopes to foster ownership from all participants, not just NDI, as it had been previously.

The Task Force includes an executive committee, representatives from member organizations, and terms of reference that have been decided upon by its members. The main form of communication for the advocates is a closed Facebook group (in Georgian) where members discuss current actions, upcoming meetings, and important announcements. The Task Force members also meet frequently to coordinate next steps, and occasionally a few members will get together informally to discuss and plan as well.

It is important to note that since the Task Force is comprised of Georgian women staff of international organizations, they are limited on what they can advocate for because of mandate restrictions from their respective organizations. Donor organizations must report against their own objectives and targets, which leads to constraints in what the Task Force members can advocate for. Therefore the advocates are, first and foremost, representatives of their organizations and individual advocates second. Maka Meshveliani, UNDP Gender Programming Manager, explains that this can lead to tension at times because advocates must constantly be aware of their organizations' objectives while balancing their personal investment in the issue as well. Additionally, there is no formal joint programming, so although organizations try to coordinate their contributions to the Task Force, donors occasionally have competing, or overlapping, priorities. This can lead to unequal distribution of work and an increased sense ownership over the Task Force by the members who take on the majority of the work.

Meshveliani feels that the Task Force should be re-organized, with more defined roles and responsibilities among members. In fact, there has been some discussion among members as to whether the Task Force needs its own funding rather than individual organizations contributing through coordinating activities, and Meshveliani believes the Task Force should ultimately be comprised of local organizations in order to be sustainable and to allow for less restrictive advocacy.

Women's Movement

The Georgian Women's Movement is a grassroots, loosely organized group of advocates who support the cause of gender equality in Georgia. It is difficult to know exactly how many women (and men) are involved in the movement because there is no formal registration process, but the group's Facebook page has over 1,000 members. Social media is largely used to coordinate meetings and rallies, and the meetings are public so anyone can join.

The Women's Movement, while loosely organized, allows for a great deal of freedom and flexibility. It is intentionally not registered as an NGO and since it is a public group, all members have equal say regarding decision making. However, of course natural leaders have emerged in the group because ultimately ideas must be turned into action, and those who implement the actions have a greater say in final decision making. Many members of the Task Force are members of the Women's Movement, but when they participate in the Movement, they are not participating as representatives of their own organizations but rather as private citizens. The Women's Movement is not funded by any organization, but occasionally receives small donations for specific rallies.

As previously mentioned, the Women's Movement gained traction after the media coverage of femicide cases in 2013, and many Georgians became involved in advocating for gender equality for the first time as a result. However, many members of the Women's Movement did not realize that the organizations (NDI and others) that would soon be represented on the Task Force had previously been working on these issues. Thus, once the gender quota was introduced in Parliament, there was some confusion regarding why the Women's Movement was not taking the lead on the initiative. Accordingly, there has been some tension and communication issues between the Task Force and the Movement regarding ownership and coordination, even though ultimately they are working towards the same goal.

In their book, *A New Weave of Power, People and Politics*, VeneKlasen and Miller discuss the benefits and limitations of building networks and coalitions. The relationship between the Task Force and Women's Movement would most closely resemble a network because although individual relationships exist among people working with the two entities (and in some cases, advocates themselves are members of *both* groups), organized coordination between the two groups does exist. This allows for a broader base of support, increases the scale and influence of coordinated actions, creates a stronger public image, and enhances the consistency and strength of the advocates' message (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002). However, there are downsides to the working relationship between the two entities, chiefly the confusion and tension regarding ownership of the gender quota bill and the fact that only certain members can participate on the Task Force.

Overall, the Task Force and the Movement complement each other because the Women's Movement members can stand outside in the street and rally with posters, while the Task Force

can talk to MPs through direct lobbying. This is an example of grassroots and high-level advocates working together to accomplish a shared goal, and while there are bound to be complications at times, it is more effective than a single group on its own.

Policy: Issues and Analysis

The Quota

Due to the complex structural and cultural environment of Georgia, advocates have identified a quota to be a necessary next step to ensure women’s participation in the political process. Manana Nachkebia, of New Rights, a minority party, states that “Quotas are not some kind of privilege...they compensate for the barriers and discrimination experienced by women going into political life in Georgia” (Potter, 2014).

The Task Force proposed a quota that would address the complexities of Georgia’s parliamentary system in which 77 seats are divided among political parties that win through proportional representation, using pre-decided candidates. It would seek to achieve a 25% quota by requiring political parties to nominate women as 50% of their proportional representatives of Georgia’s parliament (excluding single mandate districts) to ensure that parties include more women on their candidate lists -- for parliamentary as well as local elections. Consequently, this would ensure at least 25% women representation in the parliament of Georgia, and would also increase the number of women in Sakrebulo (the representative bodies similar to a city council in Georgian municipal government). According to international analyses by United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), for meaningful participation in political life, women should constitute at least a “critical minority” of 30% in the

legislature (UNDP, 2017). In this way, they will be able to include women's perspectives and experiences in policy and decision-making processes. The Task Force would have liked to aim for higher than 25% representation but knew that because of the resistance they already faced, 25% would be more well-received.

The Task Force also strategically decided to only pursue a mandatory quota for the proportional party list candidates because of the complexity of elections in single-mandate districts. For the single mandate constituencies, candidates must entirely fund their own campaign which means they must have significant financial resources. However, in Georgia, many women simply do not have access to funds to support a campaign. Moreover, many women have stated that if they ran in single-mandate constituencies they would not want to subject themselves or their families to the scrutiny that would surely follow. However, NDI focus groups have shown that women would be more willing to put their names on the party list because they feel it is less risky and more low-profile (Meshveliani, 2016). This information, paired with the fact that NDI studies have shown that people typically vote across party lines, helped the Task Force members agree to only pursue change to the party list system out of the belief that if women are placed on party lists, they will, in fact, be elected. They just need a chance to be included in the first place.

The mandatory aspect of the quota follows from the fear and legitimate concern that if it were optional, parties would not comply, regardless of incentives. In fact, for several years, Georgia's parliament has proposed a financial incentive for parties that voluntarily promote women candidates at election time, and parties can receive as much as 30% extra funding for their campaigns (NDI, 2015). However, the largest political parties have not taken advantage of

the voluntary gender quota because they do not need the extra funding. Therefore, the voluntary quota has not made a difference in terms of more women in parliament because only a few very small parties have taken advantage of the incentive and purely for financial gain.

Politics: Targets (Policy-makers and Institutions), Allies and Opponents

The Democracy Owner's Manual explains that the first step in establishing targets is determining who makes the decision (Shultz, 2002). Shultz explains that advocates must make their primary target the person or institution with the direct authority to deliver what they are demanding. Accordingly, the main target for the Task Force's primary policy effort- to instill a mandatory gender quota- is the Parliament of Georgia (including the Prime Minister and cabinet) because Parliament determines which laws are passed and implemented. Therefore, the primary targets are the Members of Parliament and secondary targets include media, the general public, and voting citizens.

Parliamentary elections in Georgia were held in October 2016, and the new representatives took office in January 2017. The ruling party, Georgian Dream, decisively won the election with nearly 50% of the vote, with the opposition party, United National Movement (UNM) receiving almost 30% of the vote. The remaining votes went to a number of smaller parties including the pro-Russian Alliance of Patriots which received 4.9 percent of votes. However, due to parliamentary protocol, the Alliance fell short of the five percent threshold required in order to win parliamentary mandates. Therefore, the primary political parties that concern the advocates are Georgian Dream and UNM, because they have they comprise the majority of MPs and hold the most influence.

Georgian Dream rose to power in 2012 and is funded by billionaire tycoon Bidzina Ivanishvili, the country's richest man. Both the president of Georgia, Giorgi Margvelashvili, and the prime minister, Giorgi Kvirikashvili, are members of the Georgian Dream party. The fact that the Georgian political system is still relatively new can make it difficult to decipher the ideology or motivation behind certain parties' actions. However, the GD platform has traditionally pushed for economic and governance reforms, with a focus on rebuilding Georgia into a democratic and free market economy.

The United National Movement party was founded by former president Mikheil Saakashvili who rose to power in 2003 after the Rose Revolution (widely viewed as a turning point towards a pro-western change of power in the country). Saakashvili's presidency was characterized by a pro-democracy outlook, and during this time the government embarked on a journey to democratize the country through myriad reforms, amendments, and laws (BBC, 2016). Today the UNM party still favors close ties with NATO and the European Union and traditionally supports Western-oriented, progressive policies.

Overall, both the GD and UNM parties share a commitment to neo-liberalism and joining the European Union. Theoretically, it would seem that this would make for an easier introduction to gender equality in Georgia's Parliament since most European countries support increased female representation in government. However, there are indeed other influences at play including traditional gender roles and the influence of the Georgian Orthodox church in society at large.

It is important to note that constitutional reform in 2013 transferred considerable authority from the Presidency to the Prime Minister's Office (Economist, 2016) and so the major decision makers are the Prime Minister, his cabinet, and the MPs. It is crucial for the Task Force

and advocates to be aware of the ideologies of their targets in order to most effectively lobby and hopefully, persuade them to support the quota.

Strategy

Phase 1 Tactics

The first attempt to introduce the gender quota bill began when the Task Force assembled in 2014. The Task Force primarily employed high-level advocacy tactics consisting of direct lobbying and meetings with MPs. Due to the nature of the Task Force membership, high-level advocacy was a natural choice because many members had previously worked with Parliament with their respective organizations and many continued to work with Parliament throughout the process not only as advocates but also in their official capacities. This made for easy access to parliamentary members and the Gender Equity Council.

Although the Task Force had immediate access to MPs, their approach was a very organic process that arose out of response to current events, and therefore was quite unstructured and disorganized at times. The Task Force did not model any international example or even have a specific strategy for the entire campaign. They had background knowledge in the sense that they knew the road to a gender quota would be long and challenging (based on other countries’ experiences), but the process was very specific to the Georgian reality and the advocates truly learned everything for the first time as they progressed through the process. Naturally, some of the Task Force’s tactics were more effective than others, and Task Force member Maka Meshveliani states, “we won’t be making the same mistakes again” (Meshveliani, 2016). A

detailed analysis of major lessons learned is discussed later on in the evaluation and lessons learned sections of this paper.

Meetings with MPs

The Task Force began by holding a series of meetings with MPs and introducing the idea of a gender quota to the Parliament. At first, the Task Force was met with a great deal of resistance and male MPs would frequently ridicule the idea of more women in Parliament. However, as time went on, MPs became more familiar with the notion of greater female representation, and while it's difficult to quantify an increase in support, interviewed Task Force members all state that as a result of meetings with MPs, many softened to the idea of more female representation. In total, the Task Force has hosted over 50 lobbying meetings with the Speaker of Parliament, the President of Georgia, government officials, and political party leaders (NDI, 2015).

The primary goal of the meetings was to stress the importance of more women in parliament and to help MPs understand the concept of the gender quota. While the meetings eventually did contribute to a more positive outlook on women in parliament, the language and manner in which the advocates initially framed their message proved to be a detriment to gaining MP support. This is because, given the way parliament is set up with proportional and single mandate representation, the advocates asked for 50% of the party list to be women (which would ultimately get them to 25% total women representation). However, when the Task Force introduced this idea, many MPs became fixated on the 50% and thought the advocates wanted half of the *entire* parliament to be women, when in reality, they were only asking for 50% of the party list. Maka Meshveliani, one of the leaders of the Task Force, explained that throughout the

process it became apparent that although the MPs serve as representatives, many do not understand the system or how the legislative process works in Georgia. The Task Force incorrectly assumed that MPs did, in fact, understand the electoral system which led to a great deal of confusion regarding the gender quota. Unfortunately, the main idea that MPs took away from meetings with the Task Force was 50% representation, which completely contradicted the Task Force's strategy of aiming for only 25% (out of fear of criticism if they pushed for a higher percentage). To complicate matters, there was mixed media coverage regarding the gender quota bill which led to the public also being confused about whether the bill was pushing for 50% or 25% women representation.

Committee introductions

After two years of meetings with MPs, the Task Force managed to introduce a legislative initiative that was discussed in committee hearings. The process for passing a bill in Georgia is two-fold: a legislative initiative can either be introduced through a plenary session by having an MP sponsor, or it can be introduced through committee. Since the Task Force lacked a sponsor to introduce the legislation to the plenary, they resorted to introducing the bill through committees. However, Parliamentary leadership decides which committees will hear the proposed bill so the advocates did not have prior knowledge regarding which MPs would be involved in the process. Nevertheless, the bill passed in the human rights committee but was ultimately voted against in the legal committee.

While the Task Force was working to introduce their gender bill in the relevant committees, a female MP, Nana Gergishvili from the Georgian Dream party, was working to initiate her own gender quota bill separate from the Task Force. Her bill called for 30% of the

entire parliament to be women representatives. The Task Force did not support this bill on principle, believing that it was asking for too much, too soon. Additionally, there was a great deal of speculation that Gergishvili was only introducing the bill to secure a political “win” since she was up for re-election, had previously lost much of her party’s support, and wanted to ensure inclusion on the Georgian Dream party list for the 2017 elections. The Task Force struggled with how to respond to this development- suddenly there were two gender quota bills being discussed in parliament and while it was a positive development that discussions regarding women’s political participation were being held, Gergishvili essentially sabotaged the Task Force’s efforts and contributed to even greater confusion among MPs. Gergishvili never once consulted with the Task Force (although she was aware of their work) and the Task Force did not openly support her, but also did not distance themselves. Meshveliani explained that, in hindsight, the Task Force should have immediately released a statement to explain that they were not involved in Gergishvili’s bill, but they learned from the process and will apply lessons learned to the next phase of the campaign.

Search for MP Champion

Ideally, the Task Force would have preferred to introduce the gender bill through an MP sponsor so that it would be heard through a plenary session. However, despite their best efforts, the advocates were unable to find an MP to champion the cause. While numerous MPs expressed their support for the initiative in private meetings with the Task Force, when it came down to publicly backing the quota, there were no MPs willing to take a stand. This is an ongoing challenge that the Task Force faces, and they hope to find an influential MP to serve as a messenger in the future.

Collaboration with GWM

Additional advocacy tactics were used by the Task Force included members’ individual support of the Georgian Women’s Movement. While the Task Force is a separate entity from the Georgian Women’s Movement, there is a great deal of collaboration between the two groups. There have been several rallies held throughout the past years with a large number of women (and men) participants and an increasing number of Georgians are becoming aware of the problem of violence against women and the need for greater female representation in parliament.

Social media efforts

The Task Force also utilized social media to raise public awareness about the gender quota. In 2015, the Task Force began a Facebook campaign to introduce gender quotas into the Georgian political system called “Win with Women – 50/50.” The first part of the campaign, called “Where are the women?” featured photos from Georgian political life that did not include any women (see Figure 1), as well as NDI poll data and statistics which demonstrated the low



Figure 1, NDI

level of women’s political participation. The campaign proposed parliamentary gender quotas as a solution. The “Where are the women?” series was followed up with a series of videos and photos of politicians and representatives of Georgian society declaring their support for gender quotas.

Phase 2 Tactics

The Task Force is now discussing a second phase of the campaign consisting of a “name and shame” approach where they will post photos of MPs who do not support the quota. However, this aspect of the campaign is still being discussed and the Task Force will revisit the idea later this year.

Upon completion of the 2016 elections and the unsuccessful introduction of the gender quota bill, the Task Force is now reorganizing itself to figure out what comes next. They have looked at examples of other countries that have implemented successful quotas and realize that the process takes years so they do not expect immediate success with implementation of the quota. At this time, the Task Force is seriously considering shifting their focus from a blanket request of a quota for both local municipal elections and national parliamentary elections to only focusing on municipal elections for the time being. This is because local municipal elections are approaching in 2017 and so it is a more relevant and timely approach, and may perhaps be more manageable since it is on a smaller scale. Similarly, the Task Force recognizes that the new parliament may make changes to the electoral process and so some members do not want to advocate for a national level policy when the structure of the electoral process is unclear and likely to change before 2020 elections.

The Task Force is, however, still considering focusing on a national-level quota. The strategy moving forward would include an NDI-financed public awareness campaign and a second initiative to collect 40,000 signatures from citizens. The plan is to reintroduce the bill to the new parliament (ideally through a plenary session) but if the Task Force is unable to find a sponsor, the 40,000 signatures will ensure that the bill will be heard by the plenary under Georgian law. Either way, 40,000 signatures will show significant public support for the bill, which will hopefully serve to persuade MPs to support the bill.

The Task Force has reason to believe that the second phase of the campaign will be more successful than the first. In early January, the advocates met with Tamar Chugoshvili, a female MP who is both the Deputy Speaker of Parliament and the current Head of the Gender Equity Council. She strongly supports the gender quota but is still hesitant to truly commit to the cause publicly, which is largely due to power dynamics and her position as a leader of the Georgian Dream party. However, when the Task Force met with Chugoshvili and provided recommendations for how the Gender Equity Council should be reformed, she was very receptive and implemented many of the Task Force's recommendations. The advocates have interpreted this as a very positive sign for future cooperation as they move forward with the campaign.

There are also positive signs of bipartisan cooperation among the new composition of parliament. In January 2017, the Task Force had an encouraging meeting with UNM and Georgian Dream women and one UNM MP even stated, "We have to put aside our partisan beliefs and come together" which was fully supported by the Georgian Dream MPs as well. Accordingly, the Task Force is seeing increased signs of cooperation among the current

composition of parliament which they did not see before. Although the Task Force has always had the support of many female MPs, the recent increase in support has led the Task Force to be more hopeful than they have been in previous years. In addition, the Georgian Women's Movement is planning a rally for March 8th, International Women's Day. The focus of the march will be to push for gender quotas as well as to stop violence against women.

It is important to note that the current Prime Minister of Georgia publicly opposes quotas. While certainly a challenge, the Task Force believes that the Prime Minister will not vote against his party (Georgian Dream) if they decide to support the gender quota.

The Task Force is already looking ahead to their role once the gender quota is indeed passed in parliament. While the group will likely dissolve once the bill is passed, there will still be a need for support to recruit and train women candidates to ensure that "proxy" women are not simply placed on party lists. The advocates are committed to supporting women's political involvement in Georgia for the long-term, and will mold themselves to fit the needs of their sisters in whatever way necessary as they move closer to their goal of gender equality in Georgian politics and society.

Evaluation

Overall, the Gender Task Force on Women's Political Participation has been quite successful. While the gender quota bill is still yet to be passed, the group believes it has managed to significantly change the attitude of many Members of Parliament and the general public toward gender quotas. Just a few short years ago, people mocked the idea of a quota, stating that it would be a disservice to the Georgian people by enabling unqualified women to be placed in

positions of power. However, as a result of public awareness activities, public opinion polls, and numerous advocacy meetings with MPs, the advocates have managed to significantly change the discourse surrounding the notion of a gender quota. Unlike in past years, the Task Force rarely hears arguments regarding unqualified women and nearly every political party has developed a stance on quotas. It is important to note that not every political party has developed a pro-quota stance, but they have at least discussed and researched the issue rather than entirely dismissing it. The advocates consider this to be a positive step because it legitimizes the idea of a quota and contributes to national discourse surrounding women's political participation. The Task Force sincerely believes that they have shifted public opinion/attitudes to (a) make people take quotas more seriously, (b) push political parties to develop an opinion on quotas, and (c) encourage MPs to develop sophisticated arguments for or against quotas (interview with Kupunia, 2017). This is a massive accomplishment and will pave the way for open conversations and effective advocacy work in the future.

There are also areas where the Task Force made mistakes and lessons that they can learn from while moving forward with the next phase of the campaign. Overall, one of the major mistakes the advocates made was, in the words of Maka Meshveliani, UNDP Gender Programming Manager, "being too nice." When the Task Force met with MPs and the MPs promised to support the cause for gender quotas but did not back their words, the advocates did not place pressure on the MPs or hold them accountable. This will be a continual challenge for the Task Force moving forward and is something they seriously consider; how confrontational do they want to be? However, most of the advocates are in a difficult position because their official positions with their respective organizations limit their ability to seriously place pressure on parliament.

Another major area for improvement is the Task Force’s approach to messaging. First of all, there was a great deal of confusion among MPs regarding what the gender quota actually proposed and how it would be implemented. The advocates now realize that they assumed that the MPs understood the political process when in actuality, many MPs did not have a clear understanding of the process. Therefore, the advocates should either incorporate basic training on the Georgian parliamentary system into their advocacy meetings or incorporate the training into the donor organizations’ programming where applicable. For instance, there is some flexibility with programming through UNDP and USAID projects and perhaps now that this gap in MP knowledge has been identified, it can be addressed through alternative measures.

In a similar manner, the notion of messaging must be revisited regarding how the advocates present the issue of a gender quota to the general public. The Task Force must find a way to reach ordinary citizens with the message of a gender quota in a way that will feel relevant to their own lives. Many citizens do not understand how or why it is so important for more women in parliament. Maka Meshvaliani of UNDP explains that in some NDI-conducted focus groups, individuals felt that a gender quota was an “elite issue” and did not affect their everyday lives. However, as Meshveliani explains, this is understandable because Georgian people have little to no experience with female representatives. Therefore, people cannot comprehend how more women in parliament will improve governance in the country. And while NDI polls show that 70% of the Georgian population supports 30% women representation in parliament, it is difficult to gauge how much support is actionable. Many advocates feel that the support is still not strong enough regarding voting issues like specific legislation or supporting a specific candidate. Change is slow, and the advocates realize that it will take time to shift attitudes in regards to women’s representation in parliament. However, this is also a real opportunity for the

advocates to thoughtfully consider messaging and a new framework to help people understand how more women representatives can affect their individual lives.

Another major obstacle that the Task Force faced was the fact that they did not have any real champions for the cause. The team had identified several MPs who, in theory, would support the gender quota but when it came down to taking a public stand in support for the quota, the MPs were ultimately not willing to spend their political capital on this issue. In fact, the only MP who openly supported a quota (now former Georgian Dream MP) ended up harming the advocates' campaign with her own poorly thought-out bill that she introduced for what was primarily her own personal gain.

The experience of the Task Force also clearly highlighted the need for organized grassroots activism in Georgia, something which is currently lacking. Of course, coordinated efforts not only require structure, but also funding which is a major obstacle among local Georgian organizations. Additionally, there is a delicate balance for all organizations regarding maintaining a working relationship with the government while also advocating for a policy and organizing at the same time, which is why many Georgian NGOs hesitate to become too involved in the process. The advocates could benefit from a local NGO that would be willing to risk a positive relationship with the Georgian parliament to truly advocate for the cause, but as of now, no such player exists.

Lessons Learned

Advocates can learn many lessons from the experience of the Gender Task Force for Women's Political Participation. Perhaps the main lesson to be learned is that there is so much

groundwork that goes into preparing for introduction of a bill, and advocacy is a long, hard battle. Often times, advocates talk about “political will” being necessary for change in policy. This is, of course, necessary but political will does not suddenly appear- there is a lot of work that goes into establishing political will in the first place. This is more or less what the Task Force has begun to accomplish and what they will continue to work on moving forward. Organizing and advocacy take time and small wins are crucial to maintaining energy throughout the process. To date, the Task Force believes they have secured increased public support for quotas as well as influenced all political parties to adopt a stance on quotas. The advocates are planning to keep the quota as their main goal but also focus on smaller, complimentary goals to keep momentum -- for example, focusing on women's representation in municipal governments in the interim. This is another important lesson for advocates- small goals must be considered to maintain energy while working towards the ultimate goal.

In addition, the Task Force's work shows the importance of having evidence and public support to support one's policy claims. The Task Force was able to provide solid policy recommendations because of its access to empirical data from NDI studies. The data showing public support for greater women's political participation gave the advocates a powerful message and will continue to support their efforts in the future. The advocates' familiarity with political parties and pre-existing connections to MPs aid in access to key stakeholders and show the importance of knowing and understanding primary targets.

Advocates can also learn from the collaborative efforts of the Task Force and the Women's Movement, which display the power in working together for a greater goal. Working in coalitions, however loosely defined, allows for greater breadth and depth of expertise, and it also allowed the Task Force to focus on legislative lobbying while the Women's Movement

employed more grassroots techniques. There is certainly room for improvement in this regard, but the ability to mobilize the greater public is something that the Task Force could not accomplish without the help of the Women’s Movement.

When reflecting on the success and overall strategy of the Gender Task Force on Women’s Political Participation, it is clear that the advocates have a number of inherent strengths that will serve them well as they continue to advocate for a gender quota. The fact that the Task Force has access to empirical data provided by NDI is a major strength and will inform the process moving forward. Perhaps the greatest strength the advocates possess is an inherent knowledge of the Georgian political context and system, as well as a vested interest in the cause because most of the advocates are indeed women who would directly benefit from greater representation in parliament. The advocates have learned many lessons throughout the first three years of the campaign, and will certainly apply the lessons learned as they move forward with the process. With the support of the Women’s Movement, an increasing number of concerned and involved Georgian citizens, and the growing awareness among representatives, advocates believe that they will realize their goal of greater women’s representation in Georgia.

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